

Notifiable Conditions: Additional Information

by Greg Smith, MPA

Public health surveillance is the ongoing and systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of health data. Notifiable conditions surveillance is a critically important method for conducting surveillance in which health care providers, laboratories, and health care facilities report the occurrence of selected health events to the public health system.

Each of the major categories of reporters (laboratories, health care providers, and facilities) have distinct reporting requirements articulated in WAC 246-101, the regulation that covers notifiable condition surveillance in Washington. The following website contains information on notifiable conditions: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/os/policy/246-101.htm>. Refer to the sections below for information about the specific conditions that are reportable by health care providers, laboratories, and health care facilities:

WAC 246-101-101 for **health care providers**

WAC 246-101-201 for **laboratories**

WAC 246-101-301 for **health care facilities**.

In general, laboratories provide a more limited set of information about a confirmed or preliminary test result to public health authorities than is typically received from health care providers or facilities. What this means is that although a particular condition may be designated as notifiable by a health care provider and from a laboratory, the information received from the health care provider and the laboratory is unique and complementary. In addition to those conditions that are designated as notifiable in the regulations, laboratories and public health authorities may enter into cooperative agreements to provide information

about additional laboratory tests.

Laboratories are required to submit information about test results including the test performed, the result of that test, the name and contact information for the ordering health care provider, the name of the patient (or patient identifier if no name is available), contact information and other demographic information if the laboratory has that information available. Laboratories are not required to submit patient contact information and demographic information if they do not already have the information at hand. For most conditions, laboratories are required to submit this information to the local health department of the patient's residence, or if that is not known, to the local health department of the ordering health care provider.

Currently, collection of this data is largely done via manual processes (e.g. phone, fax, or mail). In the next two years, many of the larger clinical laboratories will be offered the opportunity to change the process they use for the submission of this information to the public health system by providing electronic HL-7 messages to DOH in place of the manual process.

In addition to reporting test results, laboratories are also required to submit selected specimens and clinical samples to the Public Health Laboratories at the Department of Health or at Public Health-Seattle and King County for confirmation, typing, speciation and other advanced testing.

Information derived from these reports is used to begin case investigation around the circumstances of a notifiable condition event. Results of the investigation lead to public health authorities at the local level providing case management, outbreak control and prophylaxis as necessary. At the state level this information is used to evaluate the effect of existing disease prevention programs and the design of new programs.

For more information please contact Greg Smith, Washington Electronic Disease Surveillance Development Director, (206) 361-2924.

Inside This Issue

- 2 8th Annual Clinical Lab Conference
 - 3 Salary Survey / Lab Professions
Website / QC for Waived Test Kits
 - 4 Calendar of Events
-

8th Annual Clinical Laboratory Conference

by Leonard Kargacin

The 8th Annual Clinical Laboratory Conference will be held on November 12, 2001, at the Seattle Marriott Hotel near Sea-Tac International Airport. This is an excellent opportunity to hear about the current status of laboratory issues in health care from a variety of experts.

Dennis Weissman, President and Publisher of Washington G-2 Reports in Washington, D.C. will present the keynote address for the conference. This year's session is titled "National Healthcare Policy Developments & Outlook: What Labs Can Expect". Those who have heard Dennis speak in the past know that his presentation will be very dynamic and thought provoking.

Linda Breiwick, Program Director for Shoreline Community College CLT/MLT Program, and Mary Lampe, Program Director for the University of Washington CLS/MT Program, will provide information on the laboratory personnel shortage in Washington. They will provide an update on the continued activities of the Clinical Laboratory Advisory Council's Clinical Laboratory Personnel Shortage Workgroup that is addressing the shortage in Washington and discuss ways that you can get involved in the solutions. This will be a session that everyone working in the clinical laboratory should attend.

"ELABORATIONS" is a free monthly publication of the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) Public Health Laboratories (PHL) and Office of Laboratory Quality Assurance (LQA).

Secretary, DOH: Mary Selecky
Health Officer: Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH
Director, PHL: Romesh Gautam, PhD
Program Manager, LQA: Gail Neuenschwander
Editor: Leonard Kargacin (206) 361-2804
Circulation: Leonard Kargacin (206) 361-2804

Comments, letters to the editor, information for publication, and requests for subscription can be directed to:

"ELABORATIONS"
Washington State Public Health Labs
1610 NE 150th Street
Shoreline, WA 98155

e-mail address: leonard.kargacin@doh.wa.gov

NOTE: Letters to the editor may be published unless specified otherwise by the author.

Website addresses:

DOH home page: <http://www.doh.wa.gov>

LQA home page:
http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/fsl/LQA_Home.htm

The Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) has been in the news a lot over the past year. HIPAA has set in motion a profound transformation of how the healthcare industry gathers, handles, shares, and protects personal health information. There is confusion about how HIPAA applies to the clinical laboratory. The Conference will devote a portion of this year's program to HIPAA and try to bring it down to a practical level so that all participants will understand how HIPAA applies in their setting. Marguerite Busch from Pathology Associates Medical Laboratory in Spokane will be the speaker for this portion of the program. Marguerite is a dynamic speaker and has the ability to present a difficult topic in an easy-to-understand manner. She will discuss HIPAA from all aspects including hospitals, reference laboratories, and physician office laboratories. Greg Smith is the Development Director of the Washington Electronic Disease Surveillance System. Greg will discuss some of the more technical data transfer implications of HIPAA and relate them to the Electronic Disease Surveillance System. A Question and Answer (Q & A) session will round out the day to address your specific questions about HIPAA.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Laboratory Directors
Laboratory / Office Managers
Department Supervisors
Bench Personnel
Billing Personnel
Compliance Officers

The Conference offers something pertinent for everyone whether you work in a physician office laboratory, an independent laboratory, or a small or large hospital.

LOCATION

The Conference this year will be held at the Seattle Marriott Sea-Tac Hotel that has easy access from Interstate 5 and the airport. Conference programs and registration information will be mailed in mid-September. If you do not receive your Conference Registration Flyer or have questions, contact information is found on this page. The registration fee will be \$90.00 per person and will include a continental breakfast, breaks and lunch.

MAKE YOUR PLANS TO ATTEND TODAY!!

Laboratory Personnel Salary Survey

The representatives of both CLMA chapters and LASSA performed a statewide salary survey for the Clinical Laboratory Personnel Shortage Workgroup. The sampling was small (only 18 surveys were mailed), but it does provide general information about salary ranges that can be used by the clinical laboratory training programs in their recruitment efforts.

Job title	Mean Salary Range
Clinical Laboratory Scientist/Medical Technologist	\$33,197 - 44,034
Clinical Laboratory Technician/Medical Laboratory Technician	\$27,144 - 36,816
Histotechnologist	\$28,018 - 34,694
Cytotechnologist	\$37,690 - 52,063
Average Benefit Package (% increase over salary)	30.2%
Shift differential – Evening	\$1.33 / hour
Shift differential – Nights	\$2.11 / hour

Stay-put bonus: 15% of laboratories surveyed had “stay-put” bonuses as a means of retaining current employees. Examples of bonuses offered by facilities included: \$1000 for evening and night shifts; \$500 for day shift.

Sign-on bonus: 27% of laboratories surveyed offered “sign-on” bonuses. Examples of bonuses offered by facilities included: \$1000 – \$2000 for 1-2 years; \$1500 plus relocation expenses; \$1000 for evening or night shift.

Clarification: QC Requirements for Waived Test Kits

In the April 2001 issue of Elaborations some examples were given of waived test systems that had specific quality control requirements. One of the test systems listed was the Wyntek OSOM Strep A test. The quality control requirements listed for this test apply to the OSOM Strep test only, not to the OSOM Ultra Strep A. The Wyntek OSOM Ultra Strep A test package insert has a different set of instructions for external quality control: “In addition to your laboratory’s standard QC procedures, Wyntek Diagnostics recommends that a positive and negative external control be tested when opening a new test kit, and each operator performing testing within a test kit test a positive and negative external control once with each test kit”. The difference is that with the OSOM Strep A test the quality control statement in the package insert says the quality control **must** be tested, and with the OSOM Ultra Strep A test the package insert **recommends** that quality control be tested.

Clinical Laboratory Professions Website

The Clinical Laboratory Professions website is now active. You can access the website at www.labcareers.org. On the website you will find information about the numerous and varied job opportunities in the clinical laboratory, career description, training and requirements, skills needed, and a listing of training programs in Washington State. We have provided website and e-mail links to the training programs so students will have easy access to additional information.

8th Annual Clinical Laboratory Conference

November 12, 2001

Seattle Marriott Hotel at
Sea-Tac International
Airport

Mark Your Calendars
Now!

Calendar of Events

PHL Training Classes:

Basic Blood Cell Morphology

September 18 Shoreline

September 19 Shoreline

Examination of Urine Sediments

October 2 Shoreline

October 4 Shoreline

Northwest Medical Laboratory Symposium

October 10 - 13 Portland

8th Annual Clinical Laboratory Conference

November 12 Seattle

WSSCLS/NWSSAMT Spring Meeting

April 25-27, 2002 Everett

Contact information for the events listed above can be found on page 2. The Calendar of Events is a list of upcoming conferences, deadlines, and other dates of interest to the clinical laboratory community. If you have events that you would like to have included, please mail them to ELABORATIONS at the address on page 2. Information must be received at least one month before the scheduled event. The editor reserves the right to make final decisions on inclusion.

ELABORATIONS

Washington State Department of Health
1610 NE 150th Street
Shoreline, WA 98155